

5666

THE
Eternity of Hell Torments,

BY THE LATE
REV. JONATHAN EDWARDS, A. M.
PRESIDENT OF NEW JERSEY COLLEGE.

REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE
REV. C. E. DE COETLOGON, A. M.

Regions of Sorrow, doleful Shades; where Peace
And Rest can never dwell; Hope never comes,
That comes to all: but Torture without End
Still urges, and a fiery Deluge fed,
With ever-burning Sulphur unconsum'd.

MILTON.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY W. JUSTINS, SHOEMAKER-ROW, BLACKFRIARS; FOR
R. THOMSON, No. 30, LITTLE PULTENEY-STREET, SOHO.
SOLD ALSO BY MATHEWS, STRAND; BUCKLAND,
PATERNOSTER-ROW; MURRAY, PRINCES-
STREET, SOHO; MURGATROYD, CHIS-
WELL-STREET; ASH, TOWER-STREET;
WATTS, WINDMILL-HILL; AND
BUTTON, NEWINGTON-
CAUSEWAY.

MDCC, LXXXVIII.

Where may be had,
The JUSTICE of GOD in the DAMNATION of SINNERS
By the same AUTHOR. Price 6d.



THE
Eternity of Hell Torments.

A
S E R M O N.

“ These shall go away into everlasting Punishment.”

MATT. xxv. 46.

IN this chapter we have the most particular description of the Day of Judgment, that is in the whole Bible. Christ here declares that when he shall hereafter sit on the throne of his glory, the righteous and the wicked shall be set before him, and separated one from the other, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Then we have an account how both shall be judged according to their works; how the good works of the one, and the evil works of the other, will be rehearsed, and how the sentence shall be pronounced accordingly. We are told what the sentence will be on each; and then, in the text we have an account of the execution of the sentence on both the righteous and the wicked. The words of the text are the account of the execution of the sentence on the wicked or ungodly: concerning which, I may observe two things.

B

I. The

1. The *duration* of the punishment on which they are here said to enter: it is called *everlasting* punishment.

2. The *time of their entrance* on this everlasting punishment: viz. after the day of judgment, at the end of the world, when all those things, that are of a temporary continuance, shall have come to an end, and even those of them that are most lasting, the frame of the world itself; the earth which is said to *abide for ever*; the ancient mountains and everlasting hills; the sun, moon, and stars. When the heavens shall have waxed old like a garment, and as a vesture shall be changed, then shall be the time when the wicked shall enter on their punishment.

DOCTRINE. *The misery of the wicked in hell will be absolutely eternal.*

There are two diverse opinions that I mean to oppose in this doctrine. One is, that the eternal death which wicked men are threatened with in Scripture, signifies no more than eternal ANNIHILATION; that men will be the subjects of eternal death as they will be slain, and their lives finally and for ever be extinguished by God's anger; that God will punish their wickedness by eternally abolishing their being, and so that they shall suffer eternal death in this sense, that they shall be eternally dead and never more come to life.

The other opinion which I mean to oppose is, that though the punishment of the wicked shall consist in sensible misery, yet *it shall not be absolutely eternal*; but only of a very long continuance.

Therefore,

HELL TORMENTS.

3

Therefore, to establish the doctrine in opposition to these different opinions, I shall undertake to shew,

First, That it is not contrary to the divine perfections, to inflict on wicked men, a punishment that is absolutely eternal.

Secondly, That the eternal death which God threatens, is not annihilation, but an abiding, sensible punishment, or misery.

Thirdly, That this misery will not only continue for a very long time, but will be absolutely without end. And

Fourthly, That various good ends will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.

First, *It is not contrary to the divine perfections, to inflict on wicked men, a punishment that is absolutely eternal.*

The sum of the objections usually made against this doctrine is, that it is inconsistent with the justice, and especially with the *mercy* of God. And some add, if it be strictly *just*, yet how can we suppose that a merciful God can bear eternally to torment his creatures?

1. Then I shall briefly shew, *that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment.* To evince this, I shall use only one argument, viz. that sin is heinous enough to deserve such a punishment; or such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished; and, therefore, is no more than sin deserves. Now, if the obligation to love, honor, and obey God, be infinite; then sin, which is the

violation of this obligation, is a violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil.—Again: if God be infinitely worthy of love, honor, and obedience, then our obligation to love, honor and obey him, is infinitely great. God being infinitely glorious, or infinitely worthy of our love, honor, and obedience; our obligation to love, honor, and obey him, and so to avoid all sin, is infinitely great.—Further: our obligation to love, honor, and obey God being infinitely great, sin is the violation of infinite obligation, and so is an infinite evil—Once more: sin being an infinite evil, deserves an infinite punishment: such punishment, therefore, is *just*; which was the thing to be proved—There is no evading the force of this reasoning, but by denying that God, the Sovereign of the Universe, is infinitely glorious; which I presume none of my hearers will venture to do.

2. I am to shew that it is not inconsistent with the *mercy* of God, to inflict an eternal punishment on wicked men. It is an unreasonable and unscriptural notion of the mercy of God, that he is merciful in such a sense, that he cannot bear such penal justice should be executed. This is to conceive of the mercy of God as a passion, to which his nature is so subject, that he is liable to be moved, affected, and overcome, by seeing a creature in misery; so that he cannot bear to see impartial justice executed: which is a most unworthy and absurd notion of the mercy of God, and would, if true, argue great weakness.—It would be a great defect, and not a perfection in the Sovereign Judge of the World, to be merciful in such a sense, that he could nor bear to have penal justice executed. It is also a very unscriptural notion of the mercy of God. The Scriptures
every

every where represent the mercy of God as free and sovereign; and not that the exercises of it are necessary, so that God cannot bear justice should take place. The Scriptures abundantly speak of it, as the glory of Divine Mercy, that it is free and sovereign in its exercises; and not that it is of such a nature that God cannot help but deliver sinners from misery. This is a mean and most unworthy idea of the Divine Mercy.

It is most absurd also, as it is contrary to plain fact. For if there be any meaning in the objection, this is supposed in it; that all the misery of a creature, whether just or unjust, is in itself contrary to the nature of God. For if his mercy be of such a nature, that a very great degree of misery, though just, is contrary to his nature; then it is only, in our conceptions, to add to the mercy, and then a less degree of misery will be contrary to his nature: and, if you make a further addition, a yet less degree of misery will be contrary to his nature. And so, the mercy of God being infinite, *all misery must be contrary to his nature*; which is manifestly contrary to fact. For we see that God, in his providence, inflicts very great calamities on mankind, even in this life.

However strong such kind of objections against the eternal misery of the wicked, may seem to the carnal senseless hearts of men, as though it were against God's justice and mercy; yet their seeming strength, and it seeming to be incredible that God should give over any of his creatures to such a dreadful calamity as eternal helpless misery and torment, altogether arises from a want of a sense of the infinite evil, odiousness, and provocation, that there are in sin. Hence it seems to us not suitable that any poor creature should be the subject of such misery, because we have no sense of any thing
abominable

abominable and provoking in any creature answerable to it. If we had, then this infinite calamity would not seem unsuitable. For one thing would appear answerable and proportionable to another; and so the mind would rest in it as fit and suitable, and no more than what is proper to be ordered by the just, holy, and good Governor of the world.

That this is so, we may be convinced by considering, that when we hear or read, as sometimes we do, of very horrid things committed by some men, as for example, some shocking instance of cruelty, it may be to some poor innocent child, or some holy martyr; when we read or hear how such and such persons delighted themselves in torturing them with lingering torments; what terrible distress the poor innocent creatures were in, under their hands for many days together; and their cruel persecutors having no regard to their shrieks and cries, only sported themselves with their misery, and would not vouchsafe even to put an end to their lives: when, I say, we hear or read of such things, we have a sense of the evil of them, they make a deep impression on our minds. Hence it seems just, and not only so, but every way fit and suitable that God should inflict a very terrible punishment on persons who have perpetrated such wickedness. It seems no way disagreeable to any perfection of the Judge of the world: we can think of it without being at all shocked. The reason is, we have a sense of the evil of their conduct, and perceive the proportion there is between the evil or demerit of their conduct, and the punishment.

Just so, if we saw a proportion between the evil of sin, and eternal punishment; if we saw something in wicked men that appeared as *hateful* to us, as eternal misery appears *dreadful*; something that should as much
stir

stir up indignation and *detestation*, as eternal misery does *terror*; all objections against this doctrine would vanish at once. Though now it seem incredible; though when we hear of it, and are so often told of it, we know not how to realize it; though, when we hear of such a degree and duration of torments, as are held forth in this doctrine, and think what eternity is, it is ready to seem impossible, that such torments should be inflicted on poor, feeble creatures, by a Creator of infinite mercy; yet this arises principally from these two causes. First, it is so contrary to the depraved inclinations of mankind, they are so averse to the truth of this doctrine, that they hate to believe it, and cannot bear it should be true. Secondly, they see not the suitableness of eternal punishment to the evil of sin; they see not that eternal punishment is proportionable, and no more than proportionable, to the demerit of sin.

Having thus shewn that the eternal punishment of the wicked is not inconsistent with the divine perfections, I shall now proceed farther, and undertake to shew that it is so far from being inconsistent with the divine perfections, that those perfections evidently require it; i. e. they require that sin should have so great a punishment, either in the person who has committed it, or in a Surety; and therefore with respect to those who believe not in a Surety, and have no interest in him, the divine perfections require that this punishment should be inflicted on them.

This appears, as it is not only not unsuitable, that sin should be thus punished; but it is positively suitable, decent and proper. If this be made to appear, that it is positively suitable that sin should be thus punished, then it will follow, that the perfections of
God

God require it; for certainly the perfections of God require that, which is proper to be done. The perfections and excellency of the nature God require, that *that* should take place which is perfect, excellent, and proper in its own nature. But that sin should be punished eternally, is such a thing; which appears by the following considerations.

1. It is fuitable that God should infinitely hate sin, and be an infinite enemy to it. Sin, as I have before shewn, is an infinite evil, and therefore infinitely odious and detestable. It is proper that God should hate every evil, and hate it according to its odious and detestable nature. Sin, therefore, being infinitely evil and odious, it is proper that God should hate it infinitely.

2. If infinite hatred of sin be fuitable to the divine character, then the *expressions* of such hatred are also fuitable to his character. If it be fuitable that God should hate sin, then it is fuitable he should express that hatred. Because that which is fuitable to *be*, is fuitable to be *expressed*: that which is lovely in itself, is lovely when it appears. If it be fuitable that God should *be* an infinite enemy to sin, or that he should hate it infinitely, then it is fuitable that he should *act* as such an enemy. No possible reason can be given why it is not fuitable for God to *act* as such an one, as it is fuitable for him to *be*. If it be fuitable that he should hate and have enmity against sin, then it is fuitable for him to express that hatred and enmity, in that to which hatred and enmity, by its own nature tends. But, certainly, hatred in its own nature tends to opposition; to set itself against that which is hated, and to procure its evil
and

and not its good; and that, in proportion to the hatred. Great hatred naturally tends to the great evil, and infinite hatred to the infinite evil of its object.

Whence it follows, that if it be suitable that there should be *infinite hatred* of sin in God, as I have shewn it is, it must be suitable that he should execute an infinite punishment on it; and so the perfections of God require, that he should punish sin with an *infinite*, or, which is the same thing, with an *eternal* punishment.

Thus we see, not only the great objection against this doctrine answered, but the truth of the doctrine established by reason.—I now proceed farther to establish it, by considering the remaining particulars under the doctrine.

Secondly, *That eternal death, or punishment, which God threatens to the wicked, is not annihilation, but an abiding, sensible punishment, or misery.*

The truth of this proposition will appear by the following particulars.

1. The Scripture every where represents the punishment of the wicked, as implying very extreme pains and sufferings: but a state of annihilation is no state of suffering at all. Persons annihilated have no sense or feeling of pain or pleasure; much less do they feel that punishment which carries in it an *extreme* pain or suffering. They no more suffer to eternity, than they suffered from eternity.

2. It is agreeable both to Scripture and reason, to suppose, that the wicked shall be punished in such a manner, as to be *sensible* of the punishment they are under; sensible, that God is executing and fulfilling what he threatened, but which they disregarded, and would not believe—that they themselves shall know,

C

that

that justice takes place upon them; that they shall see and feel that God vindicates that majesty which they despised; that they shall see that God is not so despicable a being as they thought him to be; that they shall be sensible for *what* they are punished, while they are under the threatened punishment; that they shall be sensible of their own guilt, and remember their former opportunities and obligations, and see their own folly and God's justice.

But if the eternal punishment threatened be eternal annihilation, when it is inflicted they will never know it is inflicted. They will never know that God is just in their punishment, or that they have their deserts. And how is this agreeable to the Scripture, in which God saith, that he "will repay the wicked to his face?" Deut. vii. 10. Or to that in Job xxi. 19, 20, where, speaking of God's punishing wicked men, it is said, "God rewardeth him, and he shall *know* it; his eyes shall *see* his destruction, and he shall *drink* of the wrath of the Almighty." Or to that in Ezekiel, xxii. 21, 22. "Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof, as silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I JEHOVAH have poured out my fury upon you." And how is it agreeable to that expression, so often annexed to the threatenings of God's wrath against wicked men? "And ye shall *know* that I am JEHOVAH."

3. The Scripture teaches that the wicked shall suffer different degrees of torment, according to the different aggravations of their sins. Matt. v. 22.

"Whosoever

“ Whosoever is angry with his brother, without a
 “ cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and who-
 “ soever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be
 “ in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say,
 “ thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” Here
 Christ teaches us that the torments of wicked men
 will be different, in different persons, according to
 the different degrees of their guilt. “ It shall be more
 “ tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha, for Tyre and
 “ Sidon,” than for the cities where most of Christ’s
 mighty works are wrought.

Again, our Lord assures us, that “ he who knoweth
 “ his Lord’s will, and prepareth not himself, nor
 “ doth according to his will, shall be beaten with
 “ many stripes. But he that knoweth not, and com-
 “ mitteth things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten
 “ with few stripes.” These passages of Scripture
 infallibly prove, that there will be different degrees of
 punishment in hell; which is utterly inconsistent with
 the supposition of that punishment consisting in annihi-
 lation; in which there can be no degrees, but is the same
 thing to every one who is the subject of it.

4. The Scriptures are very express and abundant in
 this matter, that the eternal punishment of the wicked
 will consist in sensible misery and torment, and not in
 annihilation. What is said of Judas is worthy to be ob-
 served here; “ it had been good for that man if he
 “ had not been born.” Matt xxvi. 24. This plainly
 teaches us, that the punishment of the wicked is such,
 that their existence upon the whole is worse than non-
 existence. But if their punishment consist merely in
 annihilation, this is not true. The wicked in their pun-
 ishment are said to *weep, wail, and gnash their teeth*;

which implies not only real existence, but life, knowledge, activity; and that they are in a very sensible and exquisite manner affected with their punishment. In Isaiah xxxiii. 14. Sinners in the state of their punishment are represented as "*dwelling* with everlasting burnings." But if they are turned into nothing, where is the foundation of this representation? It is absurd to say sinners will *dwell* with annihilation, for there is no dwelling in the case. It is also absurd to call annihilation a *burning* ; which implies a state of existence, of sensibility, and of extreme pain: whereas, in annihilation, there is neither the one, nor the other of these. The state of the future punishment of the wicked is evidently represented as a state of existence and sensibility, when it is said, that "they shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone." How can these expressions with any propriety be understood to mean a state of annihilation? Yea, they are expressly said to " *have no rest,* " day nor night, but to be tormented with fire and " *brimstone for ever and ever.* " Rev. xx. 10. But annihilation is a state of *rest* , a state in which not the least *torment* can possibly be suffered. The rich man in hell *lift up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and entered into a particular conversation with Abraham:* all which proves that he was not annihilated.

The spirits of ungodly men, before the resurrection, are not in a state of annihilation, but in a state of misery. They are spirits in *prison* , as the apostle saith of those that were drowned in the flood. 1 Peter iii. 19. And this appears very plainly from the instance of the rich man, before mentioned, if we consider him as representing the wicked in their separate state, between death

death and the resurrection. But if the wicked even *then*, are in a state of torment, much more will they be so when they shall come to suffer that which is the proper punishment of their sins.

Annihilation is not so great a calamity but that some men have undoubtedly chosen it, rather than such a state of suffering, as they have been in even in this life. This was the case of Job, a good man. But if a good man in this world may suffer that which is worse than annihilation, doubtless the proper punishment of the wicked, in which God means to manifest his peculiar abhorrence of their wickedness, will be a calamity vastly greater still, and therefore cannot be annihilation. That must be a very mean and contemptible testimony of God's wrath toward those who have rebelled against his crown and dignity, have broken his laws, and despised both his vengeance and his grace, which is not so great a calamity, as some of his true children have suffered in this life.

The eternal punishment of the wicked is called, once and again, the *second death*. Rev. xx. 14. xxi. 8. It is doubtless called the *second death*, in reference to the death of the body; and as the death of the body is ordinarily attended with great pain and distress, so the like, or something vastly greater, is implied in calling the eternal punishment of the wicked, the *second death*. But there would be no propriety in calling it so, if it consisted merely in annihilation. This second death wicked men will suffer; for it cannot be called the second death, with respect to any other than men: it cannot be called so with respect to devils, as they die no temporal death, which is the first death. In Rev. ii. 11. it is said, "He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death;"

death;" implying, that all who do not overcome their lusts, but live in sin, shall suffer the second death.

Again: Wicked men will suffer the same kind of death with the devils! as in the twenty-fifth verse of the context; "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels*." Now the punishment of the devil is not annihilation, but torment. He therefore trembles for fear of it; not the fear of being annihilated, for he would be glad of that. What he is afraid of is torment, as appears by Luke viii. 28. where he cries out, and beseeches Christ, that he would not torment him "before the time." And it is said, Rev. xx. 10. "The devil that deceived them was cast into "the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and "the false prophet are, and shall be *tormented* day and "night, for ever and ever."

It is strange that men will go so directly against such plain and full revelations of Scripture, as to suppose, notwithstanding all these things, that the eternal punishment threatened against the wicked, signifies no more than annihilation.

Thirdly, *As the future punishment of the wicked consists in sensible misery, so it shall not only continue for a very long time, but shall be absolutely without end.*

Of those who have held that the torments of hell are not absolutely eternal, there have been two sorts.

1. Some suppose that in the threatenings of everlasting punishment, the terms used do not necessarily import a proper eternity, but only a very long duration.
2. Others suppose, that if they do import a proper eternity, yet we cannot necessarily conclude thence, that God will fulfil his threatenings.

Therefore

Therefore I shall shew, first, that the threatenings of eternal punishment do very plainly and fully import a *proper, absolute eternity*, and not merely a long duration. This appears,

1. Because when the Scripture speaks of the wicked being sentenced to their punishment, at the time when all temporal things are come to an end, it then speaks of it as *everlasting*; as in the text, and elsewhere. It is true that the term, *for ever*, is not always in Scripture used to signify eternity. Sometimes it means, *as long as a man liveth*. In this sense it is said, that the Hebrew servant, who chose to abide with his master should have his ear bored, and should serve his master, *for ever*. Sometimes it means, *during the continuance of the state and church of the Jews*. In this sense several laws which were peculiar to that church, and were to continue in force no longer than that church should last, are called *statutes for ever*. See Exodus xxvii. 21. and xxviii. 43. And sometimes it means *as long as the world stands*. So in Eccle. i. 4. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth *for ever*."

This last is the longest *temporal*, or limited duration, that such a term is ever used to signify. There is no instance of using such a term, for a longer duration, when it signifies a temporal duration. For the duration of the world is, doubtless, the longest of any of these things that are temporal, as its beginning was the earliest of any of those things that are temporal. Therefore when the Scripture speaks of things as being *before the foundation of the world*, it means that they existed *from eternity*, and before the beginning of time. So those things which continue after the
end

end of the world, are eternal things, and are after the end of time. Doubtless, when the temporal world is at an end, there will be an end to temporal things. When the time comes that heaven and earth shall be shaken and removed, those things that remain will be things that cannot be shaken, but will remain for ever. Heb. xii. 26, 27. This visible world contains all things that are seen and temporal; and therefore when it is at an end, there will be an end of all things that are temporal; and, consequently, the things that remain after will be eternal.

But the punishment of the wicked will not only remain after the end of the world, but even after that, is called *everlasting*, as in the text; "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." So in Theff. i. 9, 10. "Who shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints." Now what can be meant by a thing being *everlasting*, after all temporal things are come to an end, but that it is absolutely without end?

2. Such expressions are used to set forth the duration of the punishment of the wicked, as are never used in the Scriptures of the New Testament to signify any thing but a proper eternity. It is said, not only that infernal punishment shall be *for ever*, but FOR EVER AND EVER. Rev. xiv. 11. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up *for ever and ever*." Rev. xx. 10. "They shall be tormented day and night, *for ever and ever*." Doubtless, the New Testament must have some expressions to signify a *proper eternity*, of which it has so often occasion to speak: but it is ignorant of any higher

higher expression than this. If, therefore, this do not signify an absolute eternity, there is none that does.

3. The Scripture uses the same way of speaking to set forth the eternity of the punishment of the wicked, that it uses to set forth the eternity of the happiness of the righteous, or the eternity of GOD himself. Matt. xxv. 46. "These shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: but "the righteous into life *eternal*." The words, *everlasting*, and *eternal*, in the original, are the very same. Rev. xxii. 5. "And they (the saints) shall reign *for ever and ever*." And the Scripture has no higher expression to signify the eternity of GOD himself, than that of his being *for ever and ever*; as Rev. iv. 9. "To him who sat "on the throne, who liveth *for ever and ever*." See verse the tenth; and chap. v. 14. chap. x. 6. and chap. xv. 7.

Again: The Scripture expresses GOD's eternity by this, that it shall be *for ever*, after the world is come to an end; Psalm cii. 26, 27. "They shall perish, but thou "shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they "shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy "years shall have no end."

4. The Scripture says that wicked men shall not be delivered, till they have paid the utmost farthing of their debt—till they have paid the last mite: (Matt. v. 26. Luke x. 59.) that is, the utmost that is deserved: and by this expression, all mercy is excluded. But we have shewn that they deserve an infinite, an endless punishment.

5. The Scripture says absolutely, that their punishment shall not have an end. Mark ix. 44 "Where the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now it will not do to say, the meaning is, that their worm

D

shall

shall live *a great while*, or that it shall be *a long time* before their fire is quenched. For, if ever the time come, that their worm shall die, if ever there shall be a quenching of the fire at all, then it is not true, that their worm *dieth not*, and that the fire is *not quenched*. For if there be a dying of the worm, and a quenching of the fire, let it be at what time it will, nearer or farther off, it is equally contrary to this negation; *it dieth not—it is not quenched*.

Secondly. There are others who allow, that the expression of the threatenings, does denote a proper eternity; but then, they say, it does not certainly follow, that the punishment will really be eternal; because, say they, God may threaten, and yet not fulfil his threatenings. Though they allow that the threatenings are positive, and peremptory, without any reserve; yet they say God is not obliged to fulfil absolute, positive threatenings, as he is, absolute promises, because in promises a right is conveyed, which the creature, to whom the promises are made, will claim: but there is no danger of the creature's claiming any right by a threatening. I am now, therefore, to shew, that what God has positively declared in this matter, does indeed make it certain, that it shall be as he has declared. To this end I shall mention two things:

1. It is self-evidently contrary to the divine truth, positively to declare any thing to be real, whether past, present, or to come, which God at the same time knows is not so. Absolutely threatening that any thing *shall be*, is the same as absolutely declaring that it *is to be*. For any to suppose that God declares that any thing will be, which he at the same time knows will not be, is blasphemy, if there be any such thing as blasphemy.

Indeed,

Indeed, it is very true, that there is no obligation on God, arising from the claim of the creature, as there is in the promises. But they seem to reckon the wrong way, who suppose the necessity of the execution of the threatening, to arise from a proper obligation on God to the creature, to execute, consequent on his threatening. For, indeed, the certainty of the execution arises the other way; viz. from the obligation there was on the omniscient God, in threatening, to conform his threatening to what he knew would be future in execution. Though, strictly speaking, God is not properly obliged to the creature to execute, because he has threatened; yet he was obliged, not absolutely to threaten, if at the same time he knew that he should not, or would not fulfil: because this would not have been consistent with his truth. So that from the truth of God, there is an inviolable connection between positive absolute threatenings, and execution. They who suppose that God absolutely threatened, or positively declared, that he would do contrary to what he knew would come to pass, do therein suppose that he absolutely threatened, contrary to what he knew to be truth. And how one can speak contrary to what he knows to be truth, in declaring, promising, or threatening, or any other way, consistently with inviolable truth, is inconceivable.

Threatenings are significations of something; and if they are made consistently with truth, they are true significations, or significations of truth, or significations of that which shall be. If absolute threatenings are significations of any thing, they are significations of the futurity of the things threatened. But if the futurity of the things threatened, be not true and real, how

can the threatenings be a true signification? And if God, in them, speak contrary to what he knows, and contrary to what he intends, how he can speak true is inconceivable.

Absolute threatenings are a kind of *predictions*; and though God is not properly obliged, by any claim of ours, to fulfil predictions, unless they are of the nature of promises; yet it certainly would be contrary to truth, to predict and say such a thing should come to pass, which he knew at the same time would not come to pass. Threatenings are declarations of something future, and they must be declarations of future truth, if they are true declarations. Its being future alters not the case, any more than if it were present. It is equally contrary to truth, to declare contrary to what at the same time is known to be truth, whether it be of things past, present, or to come: for all are alike to God.

Besides, we often have declarations in Scripture of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, in the proper form of predictions, and not in the form of threatenings. So in the text: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" So in those frequent assertions of eternal punishment in the revelation; some of which I have already quoted. The revelation is a prophecy, and is so called in the book itself; so are those declarations of eternal punishment. The like declarations we have also in many other places of Scripture.

2. The doctrine of those who teach, that it is not certain God will fulfil those absolute threatenings, is blasphemous another way. For God, according to their supposition, was obliged to make use of a fallacy to govern the world. They own it is needful, that men should apprehend themselves liable to an eternal punishment, that
- they

they might thereby be restrained from sin ; and that God has threatened such a punishment, for the very end that they might believe themselves exposed to it. But what an unworthy opinion does this convey of God and his government, of his infinite majesty, and wisdom, and all-sufficiency !

Besides, they suppose that though God has made use of a fallacy, yet it is not such an one but they have detected him in it. Though God intended men should believe it to be certain, that sinners are liable to an eternal punishment ; yet they suppose that they have been so cunning as to find out that it is not certain. And so, that God hath not laid his design so deep, but that such cunning men as they can discern the cheat, and defeat the design : because they have found that there is no necessary connection between the threatenings of eternal punishment, and the execution of that threatening.

Considering these things, it is not much to be wondered at, that the great archbishop Tillotson, who has made so great a figure among the new-fashioned divines, should advance such an opinion as this !

Before I conclude this head, it may be proper for me to answer an objection or two, that may arise in the minds of some.

It may be here said, we have instances wherein God hath not fulfilled his threatenings ; as his threatening to Adam, and in him to mankind, that they should *surely die*, if they should eat the forbidden fruit. I answer, It is not true that God did not fulfil that threatening : he fulfilled it, and will fulfil it, every jot and tittle. When God said, “ Thou shalt surely die ;” if we respect *spiritual* death, it was fulfilled in Adam’s person, in the day that he ate. God immediately took away his image, his
Holy

Holy Spirit, and original righteousness, which were the highest and best life of our first parents; and they were immediately in a doleful state of spiritual death.

If we respect *temporal* death, that was also fulfilled. He brought death upon himself and all his posterity; and he virtually suffered that death on the day in which he ate the forbidden fruit. His body was brought into a corruptible, mortal, and dying condition; and so it continued till it was dissolved.—If we look at *eternal* death, and indeed the whole of that death, which was comprehended in the threatening, it was properly speaking fulfilled in Christ. When God said to Adam, If thou eatest, thou shalt die, he spake not only to him, and of him, personally, but the words respected mankind, Adam and his race; and doubtless, were so understood by him. His offspring were to be looked upon as sinning in him, and so should die with him. The words do as justly allow of an imputation of death, as of sin: they are as well consistent with dying in a surety, as with sinning in one. Therefore the threatening is fulfilled in the death of Christ, the surety.

Another objection may arise from God's threatening to Nineveh. He threatened that in forty days Nineveh should be destroyed, which yet he did not fulfil. I answer, that threatening could justly be looked upon no otherwise, than as *conditional*. It was of the nature of a warning, and not of a denunciation. Why was Jonah sent to the Ninevites, but to give them warning, that they might have opportunity to repent, reform, and avert the approaching destruction? God had no other design, or end, in sending the prophet to them, but that they might be warned and tried by him, as God warned the Israelites, and warned Judah and Jerusalem before their destruction. Therefore the prophets, together with
the

the prophecies of approaching destructions, joined earnest exhortation to repent and reform, that the evils might be averted.

No more could justly be understood to be certainly threatened, than that Nineveh should be destroyed in forty days, *continuing as is was*. Because it was for their wickedness that destruction was threatened; and so the Ninevites took it. Therefore when the cause was removed, the effect ceased. It was contrary to God's known manner, to threaten destruction for sin here in this world absolutely, so that it should unavoidably come upon the persons threatened, let them repent, and reform, and do what they would; agreeable to Jer. xviii. 7, 8. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." So that all threatenings of this nature had a condition implied in them, according to the known and declared manner of God's dealing. Nor did the Ninevites take it as an absolute sentence, or denunciation: for if they had, they would have despaired of any benefit by fasting and reformation.

But the threatenings of eternal wrath are positive and absolute. There is nothing in the word of God from which we can gather any condition. The only opportunity of escaping, is in this world. This is the only state of trial wherein we have any offers of mercy, or there is any place for repentance.

Fourthly. *I shall mention several good and important ends, which will be obtained by the eternal punishment of the wicked.* And

1. Hereby

1. Hereby God vindicates his injured majesty. Sinners cast contempt upon it, and trample it in the dust; but God vindicates, and honors it, and makes it appear, as it is indeed, infinite; by shewing, that it is infinitely dreadful to condemn or offend it.

2. God glorifies his justice. The glory of God is the greatest good: it is that which is the chief end of the creation: it is of greater importance than any thing else. But this is one way wherein God will glorify himself; as, in the eternal destruction of ungodly men, he will glorify his justice. Therein he will appear as a just Governor of the world. The vindictive justice of God will appear strict, exact, awful, terrible, and therefore glorious.

3. God hereby, indirectly, glorifies his grace on the vessels of mercy. The saints in heaven will behold the torment of the damned. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Isaiah lxvi. 24. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." And as in Rev. xiv. 10. it is said, that "they shall be tormented in the presence of the Holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb;" so they will be tormented in the presence of glorified saints.

Hereby the saints will be made the more sensible how great their salvation is, when they shall see how great the misery is, from which God hath saved them. Perceiving how great a difference he hath made between their state and the state of others, who were by nature, and perhaps by practice, no more sinful and ill-deserving than they; it will give them a stronger sense of the wonderfulness

fulness of God's grace to them. Every time they look upon the damned, it will excite in them a lively and admiring sense of the grace of God in making them so to differ. This, the Apostle informs us, is one end of the damnation of ungodly men; Rom. ix. 22, 23. "What
" if God willing to show his wrath, and to make his
" power known, endured with much long-suffering the
" vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might
" make known *the riches of his glory on the vessels of*
" *mercy*, which he had afore prepared unto glory?" A view of the misery of the damned will double the ardour of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.

4. The sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints for ever. It will not only make them more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the grace of God in their happiness; but it really makes their happiness the greater, as it will make them more *sensible* of their own happiness. It will give them a more lively relish of it; it will make them prize it more. When they see others who were of the same nature, and born under the same circumstances, plunged in such misery, and they so distinguished, it will make them the more sensible how happy they are. A sense of the opposite misery in all cases greatly increases the relish of any joy or pleasure. The sight of the wonderful power, the great and dreadful majesty, awful justice, and holiness of God manifested in the eternal punishment of ungodly men, will make them prize his favor and love vastly the more, and they will be so much the more happy in the enjoyment of it.

THE ETERNITY OF APPLICATION.

1. From what hath been said, we may learn the folly and madness of the greater part of mankind, in that for the sake of present momentary gratifications, they run the venture of enduring all these eternal torments. They prefer a small pleasure, or a little wealth, or a little earthly honor and greatness, which can last but for a moment, to an escape from this punishment. If it be true that the torments of hell are eternal, “ what “ will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and “ lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” What is there in this world, which is not a trifle, and lighter than vanity in comparison with these eternal things?

How mad are men, who so often hear of these things, and pretend to believe them, who can live but a little while, a few years; who do not even expect to live here longer than others of their species, ordinarily do; and who yet are careless about what becomes of themselves in another world, where there is no change and no end! How mad are they, when they hear that if they go on in sin, they shall be eternally miserable, that they are not moved by it, but hear it with as much carelessness and coolness, as if they were no way concerned in the matter; when they know not but they may be suffering these torments before a week is at an end; and that if it should be so, it would be no strange thing—no other than a common thing!

How can men be so careless of such a matter as their own eternal and desperate destruction? What a strange stupor and senselessness possess the hearts of men! How common a thing is it to see men, who are told from sabbath to sabbath of eternal misery, and who are as mortal

as

as other men, so careless about it, that they seem not to be at all restrained by it from whatever their souls lust after! It is not half so much their care to escape eternal misery, as it is to get money, or land; to be considerable in the world, and to gratify their senses. Their thoughts are much more exercised about these things, and much more of their care and concern is about them. Eternal misery, though they lie every day exposed to it, is a thing neglected; it is but now and then thought of; and even then with a great deal of stupidity, and not with concern enough to stir them up to do any thing considerable in order to escape it. They are not sensible that it is worth their while to take any considerable pains in order to it: and if they do take pains for a little while, they soon leave off, and something else takes up their thoughts and concern.

Thus you will see it to be among young and old. Multitudes of those who are in youth, lead a careless life, taking little thought about their salvation. So you may see it to be among persons of middle age. Nay, so it is with many, when advanced in years, and when they certainly draw near the grave. Some persons will seem to acknowledge, that the greater part of men go to hell, and suffer eternal misery, and this through carelessness about it. They, however, will do the same. How strange it is that men can enjoy themselves and be at rest, when they are thus hanging over eternal burnings; at the same time having no lease of their lives, and not knowing how soon the thread, by which they hang will break! Nor, indeed, do they pretend to know it. Whereas, if it break, they are gone, they are lost for ever, and there is no remedy! yet they trouble not themselves much about it, nor will they hearken to those

who cry to them, and intreat them to take care for themselves, and labor to get out of that dangerous condition. They are not willing to take such pains. They choose not to be diverted from amusing themselves with those toys and vanities which they have in hand. Well might the wise man say, as in Eccles. ix. 3. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil. Madnefs is in their heart while they live; and after that they go to the dead."—How much wiser are those few, who make it their main business, to lay a foundation for eternity, to secure their salvation!

2. I shall improve this subject in an use of *exhortation* to sinners, to take care to escape these eternal torments. If they be eternal, one would think that would be enough to awaken your concern, and excite your diligence. If the punishment be eternal, it is infinite; as we said before; and, therefore, no other evil, no death, no temporary torments you ever heard of, or that you can imagine, is any thing in comparison with it; but is as much less, and less considerable, not only as a grain of sand is less than the whole universe, but as it is less than the boundless space, which encompasses the universe. Therefore here,

(1.) Be intreated to consider attentively how great and awful a thing ETERNITY is. Although you cannot comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme pain for ever and ever; to suffer it day and night, from one day to another, from one year to another, from one age to another, from one thousand ages to another; and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands, in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnawing

gnashing your teeth; with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, with your bodies and every member of them full of racking torture; without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better.

(2.) Do but consider how dreadful despair will be in such torment. How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them; to have no hope—when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it; when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad, or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it; when you would rejoice if you might but have any relief, after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it; when, after you have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentation, without rest day or night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of being delivered; when, after you shall have worn out a thousand more such ages, yet you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments; that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend for ever and ever; and that your souls which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, yet will still exist to bear more wrath; your bodies which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, yet shall
not

not have been consumed, but will remain through an eternity yet, which shall not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past.

You may, by considering these things, make yourselves more sensible than you ordinarily are; but it is little you can conceive what it is to have no hope in such torments.

How sinking would it be to you to endure such pain, as you have felt in this world, without any hope, and to know you never should be delivered from it, nor have one minute's rest! You can scarcely conceive how doleful that would be. How much more, then, to endure the vast weight of the wrath of God, without hope! The more the damned in hell think of the eternity of their torments, the more amazing it will appear to them; and alas, they are not able to avoid thinking of it. They will not be able to keep it out of their minds. Their torments will not direct them from it, but will fix their attention to it.—O! how dreadful will eternity appear to them after they shall have been thinking on it for ages together, and shall have had so long an experience of their torments! The damned in hell will have two infinites perpetually to amaze them, and swallow them up. One is, an *infinite* God, whose wrath they will bear, and whom they will behold their perfect and irreconcilable enemy. The other is, the *infinite duration* of their torment.

If it were possible for the damned in hell to have a *comprehensive* knowledge of eternity, their sorrow and grief would be infinite in degree. A comprehensive view of so much sorrow, which they must endure, would cause infinite grief for the present. Now, though they will not have a comprehensive knowledge of it, yet they will
doubtless

doubtless have a vastly more lively and strong apprehension of it, than we can have in this world. Their torments will give them an impression of it. A man in his present state, without any enlargement of his capacity, would have a vastly more lively impression of eternity than he has, if he were only under some exquisite pain, in some member of his body, and were at the same time assured that he must endure that pain for ever. His pain would give him a greater sense of eternity, than other men have. But how much more will these excruciating torments, which the damned will suffer have this effect!

Besides, their capacity will probably be enlarged, their understandings will be quicker and stronger, in a future state; and God can give them as great a sense, and as strong an impression of eternity as he pleases, to increase their grief and torment.

O, be instructed, ye that are in a Christless state—ye who are going on in the way to hell, and are daily exposed to damnation, to consider these things! If you do not, it will surely be but a little while, before you will experience them; and then you will know how dreadful it is to despair in hell; and, it may be, before this year, this month, this week is at an end; before another sabbath, or ever you shall have an opportunity to hear another sermon.

(3.) That you may effectually escape these dreadful and eternal torments, be intreated to flee, and embrace him, who came into the world for the very end of saving sinners from these torments; who has paid the whole debt due to the divine law, and exhausted eternal, in temporal sufferings. What great encouragement is it to those of you who are sensible that you are exposed to eternal punishment, that there is a Saviour provided,
who

who is able, and who freely offers to save you from that punishment; and that in a way which is perfectly consistent with the glory of God: yea, which is more to the glory of God, than it would be if you should suffer the eternal punishment of hell! For if you should suffer that punishment, you would never pay the whole of the debt. No, those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God; nor, indeed, a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part, which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite, to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation; but is actually satisfied in CHRIST. Therefore, he is accepted of the Father, and consequently all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore, believe in him: come to him; commit your souls to him, to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell. Nor is that all: but through him you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory, which will be of equal duration with the torments of hell. For as at the last day, the wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment;” so the righteous, or those who trust in Christ, shall go “into life eternal.”

12 MR 58

F I N I S.

/ 25. 24.

who is able, and who freely offers to save you from that punishment; and that in a way which is perfectly consistent with the glory of God: yea, which is more to the glory of God, than it would be if you should suffer the eternal punishment of hell! For if you should suffer that punishment, you would never pay the whole of the debt. No, those who are sent to hell never will have paid the whole of the debt which they owe to God; nor, indeed, a part which bears any proportion to the whole. They never will have paid a part, which bears so great a proportion to the whole, as one mite, to ten thousand talents. Justice therefore never can be actually satisfied in your damnation; but is actually satisfied in CHRIST. Therefore, he is accepted of the Father, and consequently all who believe are accepted and justified in him. Therefore, believe in him: come to him; commit your souls to him, to be saved by him. In him you shall be safe from the eternal torments of hell. Nor is that all: but through him you shall inherit inconceivable blessedness and glory, which will be of equal duration with the torments of hell. For as at the last day, the wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment;” so the righteous, or those who trust in Christ, shall go “into life eternal.”

12 MR 58

F I N I S.

/ 25. 24.

4476. f. 35.